

Louisville Metro Animal Services

Foster Manual

May 2011

Our foster Program is essential to the life-saving efforts at LMAS. We rely on people like you to help us save the too young, sick and injured animals who need our care.

Foster parents take into their homes dogs and cats that are:

- **Too Young or underweight:** Kittens and puppies, in a litter or paired up with another orphaned kitten or puppy. They are fostered until they are eight weeks old and weigh two pounds. Most kittens and puppies are fostered for 2-6 weeks. These litters are not with a mother. In some circumstances, the kittens are not weaned and they may need bottle-feeding.
- **Nursing Moms and babies:** Litter of kittens and puppies with their moms are fostered until the babies are 8 weeks old and weigh two pounds. There are times when mom does push a kitten away or a kitten wanders off, so you may need to supplement these babies with some replacement formula. Generally, mom does all the work until the babies start to have teeth. The mom will feed, stimulate the babies to go to the bathroom and clean up after them.
- **Ill or recovering from injuries:** Dogs and cats suffering from a minor common ailment, such as an upper respiratory infection, eye infections, or ear issues will often be sent to foster to recover in a home environment. These are usually minor cases, but it is recommended these animals be kept from resident dogs and cats to avoid spreading any diseases. We also get dogs and cats that have had surgeries such as amputations that need some time to recover away from the shelter. Foster time will depend on the nature of the injury or illness.
- **Minor behavior issues:** We often get dogs that need some help with common things like walking on a leash or being fearful. Some cats may also be fearful, or not be adjusting well in the shelter. They often just need some help with socialization to get them ready for adoption.
- **Waiting Rescue Transport:** Some dogs and cats are sent to smaller/breed specific rescue organizations. When an animal has a confirmed spot with a rescue, they will sometimes need a foster home until the rescue can arrange transportation. This would be a short term foster situation of 1-2 weeks. Animals waiting for rescue transport should be closely monitored for any signs of illness as many rescues will not transport sick animals.
- **Overcrowding:** Some dogs and cats may be sent to foster homes to help alleviate overcrowding problems in the shelter. This would be a short term foster assignment of approximately 1-2 weeks or until there is space open and available for the animal.

Some Things to Consider Before Fostering

- **Puppy and Kitten Fatalities:** Something to be aware of before you begin fostering is that sometimes foster animals become ill and pass away in foster care. This is the hardest thing about fostering and if this is a possibility that you don't think you'd ever want to risk encountering perhaps volunteering at our shelter and working with the animals there might be a better volunteer fit.

We do everything we can for every animal that comes to us, but sometimes we just can't save them. The fatality rate on kittens is 1 in 5 won't make it. So the more you foster your chances increase that you will have some die in your care. Without foster homes, these babies would not have a chance to survive at all. Although there are some foster babies we cannot save, the important thing is that we try for each and every one.

- **Letting go:** It can be hard to let go and return your foster animal to the shelter to go up for adoption. You can always adopt your foster animal, but think about whether or not you would have difficulty returning a foster animal before beginning to foster. Much as you might like to, it would probably not be feasible for your household to adopt every single animal you foster!
- **Cleaning:** You will need to work with some harsh chemicals in cleaning the foster animals' area. During the foster animals stay in your home, you will need to clean the area on a daily basis with detergent and disinfecting cleaner. This is the best way for the animals in your care stay healthy.
- **Property Damage:** Foster animals have ruined drapes, carpeting, clothing, and other valuable items. Preparing your home and the area the animals will stay can prevent most accidents, but not all of them. If you notice destructive behavior, please contact LMAS staff for advice, a crate, or to make other arrangements for the animal.
- **Isolation area:** Foster animals should be isolated from your own companion animals. A separate room or enclosed area without carpet will work best. The separation is to ensure any illness that the foster animals have does not spread to your companion animals and no problems result between the animals.
- **Supplies:** Medications that the shelter veterinarian prescribes for the animal will be provided. Any other supplies necessary can be provided if they are available. The foster program runs on donated items, so we may run short on some supplies occasionally.

Foster Parents

- Your main goal is to provide shelter, food, water, lots of love and attention, as well as keeping the foster animal safe while in your care.
- There may be times, you will need to bring the animal to the shelter for any appointments, vaccination boosters, or if the animal becomes ill and the shelter veterinarian wants to see the animal.
- You will want to socialize the dog or cat to help prepare him or her for adoption. This includes meeting new people, being picked up and held, having hands reaching out to touch them, etc.
- You have a unique opportunity to see the dogs and cats in a home setting. We do ask that you prepare a write-up on the foster animal. This will give potential adopters an opportunity to get a picture of how the animal will be in a home environment. We welcome any and all pictures.

Foster Animal Area Considerations

- Prepare the room where the foster will be kept. It is strongly recommended that the foster be quarantined from your own pets for at least 10 days, so you will need to have a room where the animal can be isolated. You should survey the room for anything that may be dangerous or simply get damaged.
- Remove anything that might be tempting for the foster to chew on. You should provide toys appropriate to their size and age. Be sure not to leave clothes, children's toys, shoes, etc, lying around for the animal to damage.
- It's best to remove plants – both real and artificial - knick-knacks, artificial flower arrangements, etc. Remove or tie-up any curtains that kittens will try to climb.
- Put any garbage cans out of reach. If they are knocked over by your foster animal, they could ingest something that could harm them.
- Block off access to any nooks and crannies that might be dangerous or in which they might get stuck.
- If the puppies or kittens have access to a bathroom, keep the toilet seat down. They can climb in and drown.
- Puppies obviously are not housebroken, so you will need to confine them to an area where it is okay for them to potty. Kittens under about 8-weeks-old are not always consistent in using the litter box so you should try to confine them to an area that is easily cleaned and accidents will not damage flooring.
- It is strongly recommended that your foster animal be kept in a crate when you are not there to supervise.

Vet Services

Foster animals may need additional vaccinations while in foster care. It will be the responsibility of the foster parent to transport the animal to the shelter or to Animal House for vaccinations and routine medical care. If your foster needs vaccinations, you will receive a vaccine schedule with your foster paperwork.

Vaccinations can be given at the shelter between the hours of 12pm and 7pm Monday through Saturday and at Animal House 12pm to 6pm Tuesday through Sunday (closed Mondays). Please call ahead to set up an appointment. If you need additional veterinary care for your foster animal, please contact the Vet Tech Office at 502-574-5669. If you're foster animal needs to be seen by the veterinarian, please call ahead and discuss the situation with vet tech staff. Veterinarian hours are 12:00pm-3:00pm Monday through Friday. You may also e-mail vet staff at animalservicesvetstaff@louisvilleky.gov for non-emergency medical questions or concerns.

After Hours Vet Services

Unfortunately, your options are limited after the shelter closes. LMAS simply does not have the resources (money and staff) to provide 24-hour vet care. If you're foster animal needs emergency veterinary care, you can contact LMAS Dispatch until 11:00pm at 502-363-6609, they will assess the situation and contact vet staff if needed.

If you choose to take the foster animal to your own vet, you would be responsible for those charges; LMAS doesn't have the financial resources to pay for outside vet care. On a daily basis, the shelter staff must make difficult decisions about how much money can be dedicated to an animal.

Medical Risks

Due to the unknown history of the animals in the shelter, the animals are susceptible to and are potential carriers of many infectious diseases, which may include intestinal parasites, as well as bacterial and viral infections. Some of these diseases, such as ringworm, can be transmitted to humans as well. Once they enter the shelter, we vaccinate the animal to help reduce the spread of diseases.

- Dogs receive: Bordetella, DAPP, Pyrantel (general dewormer), and Rabies (4 months and older), Heartworm test (6 months and older), and Revolution (flea, tick, and heartworm preventive).
- Cats receive: FVRCP, Pyrantel (general dewormer), and Rabies (4 months and older), Combo test (6 months and older), Fe-leuk test (under 6 months), and Revolution (flea, tick, and heartworm preventive).

To reduce the risk to your family and family pets

- You should discuss fostering shelter animals with your veterinarian prior to starting the foster program. Your veterinarian may recommend other vaccines or a different scheduling for vaccines to further protect your pets. It is important to remember that vaccinations do not necessarily prevent disease. However, proper vaccination substantially decreases the likelihood of developing the disease.

- Viral diseases have an incubation period, yet the animal shows no sign of disease. The animal may appear healthy, but with time, may break with disease. When the animal leaves the shelter, the virus starts and the symptoms begin to show. This can happen quickly or after a few days. Your foster animals should be kept isolated from your own pets for the duration of the foster. This is to protect your pets from any potential illness that a foster animal might carry. In dogs, common contagious viral diseases are Parvovirus and Kennel Cough. In cats, upper respiratory viruses are common.

Animal to Human Diseases

A few of them are:

- **Rabies:** Rabies is a Zoonotic disease. A virus transmitted through animal saliva causes rabies. Signs of rabies include personality and behavioral changes, in coordination, difficulty swallowing, seizures, and death. Rabies is fatal -- there is no cure in man or animals.
- **Ticks:** Ticks can transmit diseases to animals and people. Tiny organisms that are transmitted cause both diseases to people or animals from tick bites, and cause fevers, rashes, and joint pain. Neither disease is transmitted directly from pets to people.
- **Roundworms:** Nearly every puppy is born with roundworms contracted from its mother. These worms can be transmitted to people, especially children. Most infections in people are so mild as to cause no signs at all, but the potential for severe illness exists. The puppy's feces should be removed and disposed of daily and everyone who handles the puppy should wash their hands frequently. This is especially important in young children, who often put their fingers in their mouths.
- **Ringworm:** Ringworm is not a worm at all, but a fungal infection of the skin. It can be difficult to diagnose in animals, as the lesions do not look the same from case to case. Some animals, especially cats, can carry the fungus in their hair coat without showing signs of itching, scaly skin, and hair loss. In people, the classic lesion is a raised, reddened, and itchy "ring."

Disease Transmission

At the core to managing and controlling the spread of any disease is a good cleaning plan and an understanding of how diseases are transmitted. Diseases are transmitted in the following ways:

- **Direct Contact** – involves direct body surface to body surface — from one animal to another or from an animal to a human.
- **Indirect Contact**– contact between susceptible animal and a contaminated inanimate object, such as equipment, clothing, or surfaces. Often the result of poorly washed hands.
- **Droplet** – small infectious droplets that do not remain suspended in the air but travel a short distance through the air and deposit on the host's mucosal surfaces. Droplets can also land in the environment and lead to indirect contact transmission.

- **Airborne** –infectious residue from dried droplets or dust remains suspended and able to travel distances through the air. This residue is infectious for long periods of time.
- **Vector** – disease transmission occurs through another animal capable of transmitting disease host, such as a rodent, fly, mosquito, or tick.

Reducing the Risks

- **Good Hand Hygiene:** Clean hands before and after handling animals or items in the animals' environment. **Alcohol-based hand sanitizers:** are recommended when hands are not visibly soiled. They provide for a rapid kill of most transient microorganisms. **Soap and water:** Recommended when significant soiling or risk is present.
- **Cleaning and Disinfecting Items: Soaps and detergents** are cleaning agents that work by suspending dirt and grease and breaking up organic matter. Soaps do not necessarily kill germs. Dish and laundry soaps are common examples of detergents. **Disinfectants** are chemical solutions that kill germs. The particular germs killed depend on the ingredients in the disinfectant. Bleach is a common disinfectant.

Foster Help Notification

LMAS staff will send out an email giving details about the animals needing a foster home. It's on a first-come-first-serve basis. You should respond to the email to indicate what animals you are interested in (if the email lists more than one), what supplies you will need, and when you are available to pick them up. If you are not immediately available, you can email that you can foster in a few days if another foster is not available.

Most foster assignments are between 2-4 weeks. Some may be longer or shorter depending on how the age of the animals or how fast an animal recovers from illness or injury. If you take a mom and new-born kittens, this would be a 2 months to 3 month assignment. If the request doesn't specify all the information or you have questions, please ask! You never have to commit to an assignment until you know all the facts. Never feel like you have to help fill every assignment.

Some things to keep in mind when deciding to foster an animal

- Be realistic in what you are able to do – for example; don't volunteer to foster a mom and her newborn babies if you know that you are going on vacation in two weeks.
- Keep in mind that most of the animals will have an unknown history so we can't guarantee that an animal will be housebroken, get along with your pets, etc.
- The health of the animal can change quickly when he relaxes in your home, so be prepared for the possibility of the animal to come down with kennel cough, or have some vomiting/diarrhea.

Pick up

Animals can be picked up during regular kennel hours at the Manslick Rd. location. At that time you will be given a print-out of the animal's kennel card and vaccination schedule, any applicable supplies, and any prescribed medications. Please bring a copy of the kennel card with you anytime an animal is returned to the shelter.

Return

At the time of pick up, you will receive an expected return date. There is a good possibility that this will **not** be the exact date the animal is returned to the shelter. There are many factors that need to come together before an animal is returned. These factors include space at the shelter or adoption floor, the health of the returning animal, surgery schedule, rescue transport, etc. You will need to work with LMAS Foster Coordinator to arrange final return of the animal.

If you have a situation and you need to return the foster, please contact LMAS staff. This will give us time to arrange for cage space at the shelter or to find a replacement foster home. If you are unable to care for your fosters for only a day or two, you should contact the shelter to see if they can arrange a temporary foster or make other arrangements for the animals.

Foster Adoption Programs

Some animals will be available for adoption during their stay in foster care. With your help, we will work to place your foster animal into a permanent, loving home. LMAS will place your animal's pictures and description on-line and utilize other media to promote your foster animal. We also adopt many foster animals from offsite promotions and through our partnership with Petsmart stores. For these promotions, fosters will help with transporting the animal to the event, and our Adoption Coordinators or volunteers will complete any adoption paperwork.

All animals available for adoption from foster will need to be spayed or neutered and have a complete medical workup before attending adoption events. The following animals will be considered adoptable from foster:

- Animals that were originally fostered for being too young or underweight that are now 8 weeks and/or the appropriate size.
- Animals that were sick or injured that are healthy and healed.
- Animals that have minor behavior issues or are under socialized and have been adjusting well in their foster home.
- Animals that are in foster for overcrowding and have been evaluated for health and temperament.

These animals will need permission from the Adoption Supervisor before being promoted for adoption.

We welcome and encourage cute, up to date pictures of your foster animal. These pictures will be placed on the LMAS and Petfinder websites. After you begin to learn some personality traits and habits for your foster animal, you can also submit a short description and story about your foster.

We encourage foster parents to take an active role in the adoption of their foster animal. You know your foster better than anyone, so talk them up to family and friends! You can offer important information and insight into the best possible home for your foster. If you find you're foster a potential home please let LMAS adoption staff know. All adopters (including family, friends, or fosters themselves) will need to go through the regular LMAS adoption process before the animal can leave foster care.

Thank you for your interest in fostering an animal in need. Know that you are truly making a difference in their lives!